

SPECIAL PRESS RELEASE

2002 Census of Agriculture

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PRELIMINARY CENSUS RESULTS GIVE FIRST LOOK AT CHANGING FACE OF AGRICULTURE

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3, 2004 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) announced today the availability of preliminary state and national demographic data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture-the Nation’s largest agricultural information-gathering project.

“The 2002 Census of Agriculture serves as the most comprehensive source of data describing U.S. agriculture. The results show the great diversity of people involved in this important segment of our economy,” said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. “For the first time, the census will provide us with measures of the total number of people operating farms and ranches, as well as the number of households sharing in farm income.”

Veneman said the new 2002 Census results show African American, American Indian, Hispanic and women operators are all significant contributors to agriculture and their numbers have all increased since 1997. The data include the first ever comprehensive measure of the number of women involved in day-to-day farming and ranching decisions. Measures for each of these groups are also available for each state.

“This census incorporates collection of new data and improved methodologies to enable us to present the most complete and accurate picture of U.S. agriculture available,” said NASS Administrator Ron Bosecker.

Several new measures were included in the 2002 Census of Agriculture, including information about more than one operator per farm. Final, complete data for Puerto Rico are also available.

Demographic data contained in the report released today include gender of operator, residence on or off the farm, days worked off farm, years present on farm, age group categories, race and number of persons living in each household. For example, preliminary results show:

- The average age of American agricultural producers in 2002 was 55.3-years-old.
- 27.2 percent of agricultural producers were women in 2002; the number of women who were principal operators increased 12.6 percent from 1997.
- Principal operators of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin increased by 50.8 percent from 1997 to 2002.
- Black principal operators increased by 8.8 percent and American Indian principal operators increased by 19.4 percent from 1997 to 2002.
- Ninety percent of America’s agricultural operations are still run by individuals or families and most are still small farms.
- Fifty-nine percent had less than \$10,000 in sales of agricultural products in 2002.

(Continued on the next page)

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Final 2002 Census of Agriculture data at the national, state and county levels will be released on June 3, 2004. That report will provide first time facts about organic crop acreage and sales, production contracts, farm computer and Internet use, plus the broader, full range of traditional census data including land use and ownership; acres irrigated; crop acreage and quantities harvested; livestock and poultry inventories; value of products sold; value of production contracts; participation in Federal farm programs; and, market value of land and buildings.

The census of agriculture is currently conducted every five years; the first was conducted in conjunction with the 1840 population census.

To obtain similar data for the **State of Colorado**, please access the full preliminary report and page down to the Colorado data. Highlights for Colorado include the following:

- The number of farms and ranches in Colorado for 2002 is 31,361, up nearly 4 percent from 30,197 in 1997.
- Land in farms and ranches, at 31.1 million acres in 2002 is down 4 percent from 32.3 million in 1997.
- The number of farms and ranches having between 10 and 179 acres increased from 1997 while the farm and ranch numbers in all other size groups declined.
- 60 percent of the farms and ranches in Colorado had value of sales totaling less than \$10,000. Just 12.5 percent of the operations had value of sales totaling \$100,000 or more, down from 15.7 percent in 1997.
- The number of family or individual operations increased 9 percent from 1997 while the number of partnership operations declined 28 percent, the number of corporations dropped 16 percent and the number of other types of operations increased 11 percent.
- Of the 50,179 operators, 17,363 (35 percent) were women.
- 57 percent of the principal operators on the 31,361 farms and ranches work at least some time off the operation and nearly 39 percent work 200 or more days off the operation.
- 58 percent of the principal operators listed farming or ranching as their principal occupation compared with 52 percent in 1997.
- The average age of the principal operator increased to 54.5 in 2002 compared with 53.5 in 1997.
- 98 percent of the principal operators were white, just slightly higher than in 1997.

More details are available in the full preliminary report and all reports from the 2002 Census of Agriculture will be available free through the NASS web site at www.usda.gov/nass/ . For additional information regarding the Census, call the NASS Hotline at 1-800-727-9540.

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